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PRESS CONFERENCE
TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDED ~~MEETING~~ BETWEEN THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE
ASSOCIATED PRESS AGENCY, Sr. RICHARD BOUDREAUX AND HORACIO DOMINGO MAGGIO.

PRESENTATION:

Today, April 27, 1978, the Montonero Party has convoked, through the Area General Secretary, the official delegate of National Conduction in the Argentine territory, with the presence of the Military Secretary of the zone and companion Horacio Domingo MAGGIO, member of the Montonero Peronist Movement, Mr. Richard Boudreaux, reporter and Assistant Director of the U.S. Agency Associated Press in Argentina, to publicize an accusation which the People and the Montonero Party have made on several occasions. In this case we have the report of companion Maggio, who has suffered personally the horrors of captivity from February 15, 1977 when he was kidnapped by the Combined forces to March 17, 1978 when he escaped from one of the many concentration camps of the Military dictatorship: THE NAVY MECHANICS SCHOOL (ESMA).

The following is part of the release, based on the reading and clarification of a personal letter given by companion Maggio to the newspaperman, which is addressed to the Agency. With the letter the newspaperman was given the original of the charts prepared by companion Maggio which show the location of the officers club within the boundaries of the Mechanics School, the basement or torture chamber and the third floor where he was staying. Mr. Maggio also had his fingerprints taken in front of the reporter to confirm his legal identification.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny
Exemption(s): _____
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Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

LOT 81F93

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Following are the salient points of the conference:

REPORTER: Did you personally talk with other persons you sent the letters to?

MAGGIO: Yes

R: Tell me, when did NORMA ESTHER ARROSTITO get into the Mechanics School?

M: November 1976. It would be necessary to look in ~~in~~ the newspapers to see when she was kidnapped.

R: We will now read the letter

M: (Reads a paragraph of the letter addressed to the Associated Press) "... something similar occurred with Miss Norma Esther ARROSTITO who was known to be dead but was alive until January 15, 1978, bearing during more than a year of captivity the physical and psychic pressures of the Mechanics School officers. That day, in a manner which was not clear, she fainted, after receiving a shot, and she died, based on versions received, in the Naval Hospital. There is a question mark.

R: Why?

M: It is very strange that a companion of the quality and importance of Norma Arrostito should be taken to the Naval Hospital.

R: After.....

M: After receiving a shot. The fact is that she never returned to her cell. _

R: Does anyone know if she is still alive?

M: Yes. What we were informed is that she died ~~xxx~~ of a heart attack.

R: Where, in the hospital?

M: In the Naval Hospital

R: How is this known? Because the Hospital is not within the Mechanics School boundaries-right?

M: All the persons kidnapped were told that Norma Esther Arrostito had not felt well, that she had been given a shot, that she had been taken to the Naval

Hospital and that she had died there of a heart attack.

R: Did you see Norma Esther Arrostito in the Mechanics School?

M: Yes. I was with her from February 15, 1977 to January 15, 1978, almost eleven months and I talked with her.

R: The only thing that is known for sure is that she was taken away from the Mechanics School on January 15, 1978?

M: No. After what the officers reported.

R: Officers?

M: Officers.

R: Why do they (officers) inform the prisoners on what happened to her?

M: Because of her condition as a leader of the People, all the prisoners were very fond of her and I guess they did it to prevent any possible reaction on the part of the prisoners.

R: And the officers said that she had died?

M: The officer who told us was Capitan Acosta, alias "Tigre" or "Santiago".

R: Did he say that she had had a heart attack in the Hospital?

M: That is what the officer said.

(THEY READ THE LETTER)

R: "the same occurs...."

M: ".....occurs with the Argentine Ambassador in Venezuela, Dr. Hidalgo Solá. Although I can't ~~xxxixxxx~~ confirm it because I did not see him personally, the truth is that there were rumors on the third floor that the para-military group operating in the Mechanics School had kidnapped him"

R: Wasn't he on the ~~fix~~ third floor of the Mechanics School?

M: No, these were just rumors.

R: I understand. "Young Swedish.... (referring to the paragraph in the letter

which says "the young Swedish girl who had disappeared during the first days in January 1977 and whose parents, in combination with the diplomatic representatives of Sweden had requested the Argentine Government for information on her whereabouts without any reply")

M: I'm sorry. The companions later clarified something on the Hidalgo Solá case and that is that this diplomat's car ~~later appeared~~ appeared three blocks from the Mechanics School after the kidnapping.

R: ...the car appeared...?"

M: Three blocks from the Mechanics School.

(READING) "...we were lying the 24 hours of the day on a mattress on the floor, divided or separated by partitions made out of agglomerated wood...?"

R: How high were the mattresses?

M: Between 60 and 70 cms. With shackles on the feet, hoods and glasses which did not permit us to see. Furthermore, the place was full of rats. To this you should add the tortures, the electric rod, the submarine (immersion of the head under water), cigarette burns. The regime on a daily basis... For example, ~~if you~~ when you had to urinate they would bring you a pail and they gave you two seconds.....

(Then they discussed the method of eliminating the prisoners. First they shot them down, then they hung them and at present they use the shot, throwing the bodies in the water from a helicopter)

R: Children of what age? (He asks companion Maggio if he has any children)

M: Five and three years old.

P: Both boys?

M: A boy and a girl.

R: How many persons are there presently in the Mechanics School?

M: Approximately 150 persons. There were 500 to 600 persons once.

R: When?

M: Approximately eight months ago (THEY CONTINUE READING). I state that Jara the newspaperman was also there at the beginning.

R: Jara? Yes...I've got some information on him. The authorities..."Crispa" Acosta. Do they say how many were killed?

M: No, he doesn't say it.

R: Why do you believe they didn't kill you?

M: For the same reason these 150 are still alive in the Mechanics School or in other concentration camps. Many ~~gax~~ got in before I did and they are still alive.

R: Why?

M: ~~Xax~~ My personal appreciation is the condition of of prisoner should be added to the condition of hostages. Bearing in mind the development of the political process in Argentina, they will have to show some prisoners. However this number will never cover the 30.000 persons kidnapped reported in Argentina. With the deterioration of dictatorship and the popular advancement, fundamentally ^{due to} ~~xxx~~ the growth of the Peronist Montonero Movement, they will have to give a ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ^{at a national level} reply, although the People also request it at an international level. Also because of the Human Rights Policy. You also have to ~~xxxxxxx~~ keep in mind that the prisoners in these situations are submitted ~~x~~ permanently to the most horrible humiliations. The hostage is ^{due} ~~submitted~~ to the highest degree of submission and the enemy speculates with his demoralization, at least at an individual level. When they can't reach their objective, they kill them. They are also used to inflict pressures on the ~~xxxxxxxx~~ close relatives and the popular

organizations, syndicates, labor organizations and political organizations.

Let us recall the hundreds of mutilated bodies, cremated, shot down, dynamited which appeared throughout the country as a reprisal. This horrify~~ing~~^{ing} ~~attitude~~ attitude does not call our attention now. It is their doctrine.

R: ~~Where~~ Were there more persons in the Mechanics School?

M: This is what I can say because I saw it. Moving people around...you have to keep in mind the difficulties there were to do it. But there were more. It is believed that around 3,000. I had a number (they called us by numbers) 866 and the leader of the Peronist Youth Roberto AHumada, kidnapped four months before me was number 483. This companion, who was brutally tortured is in a very delicate health condition at present. Based on what I heard my number ~~was repeated~~ had been repeated for the third time in almost a year.

R: Is it almost an official figure?

M: They numbered between 001 and 1000.

R: Tell me, when you spoke with the French nuns, Alice Domon and Renée Duquet, were they very weak?..., can you describe their voice?

M: They were weak physically, but with high morale. Sister Alice had been tortured a great deal with the "picana" (electric rod) and many physical blows. The effects of the rod could be seen in her arms but I did not see the rest of her body because she was too dressed; and physical marks on her face. But she had lots of moral force. This was one of the elements that raised the morale of the rest of the prisoners.

R: What did she say, can you remember something else she said?=-

M: I can remember the general remarks, beside the specific remarks that I expressed in the letter. She said that "these men were mistaken"(referring to those who had kidnapped her) and that in this way the only thing they managed to do was give a good reason for those who fought.

R: Was her face black?

M: ...from the blows.

R: Another thing, can you explain how you escaped?

M: During a transfer

R: In what type of vehicle?

M: A truck. For or Chevrolet. Covered by a tarpaulin loose at the ends.

R: Transferred to where?

M: What I suppose...

R: Don't they tell you?

M: No, they don't tell me where they are taking me. By the zone where we were (I know nothing about the Capital) it could have been Federal Coordination.

R: On MOREno street?

STATEMENT BY FRIEND: Yes

R: Then what happened?

M: On Corrientes and Montevideo or Parana, near San Martin Theatre...

R: At night?

M: Between six and six-thirty in the evening.

R: Did others escape too?

M: No, I was alone

R: With guards?

M: Yes. Four guards in back and three in front

R: Seven

M: Specifically. Four in back with me and three in the cabin.

R: Yes, four with you, and then what happened?

M: In the moment that the truck stops...

R: Traffic

M: Yes, I believe a stoplight. Heavy traffic, raining and there were lots of people. When they braked I jumped... I was between two guards. I jumped to the street and ran.

R: Your feet were not bound?

M: The foot shackles? No, during transfers they are taken off.

R: And your hands?

M: Not either

R: Covered?

M: No. The only place they use the foot shackles according to people who came from other concentration camps was in the NAVY, the Mechanics School.

R: And did they shoot at you?

M: I heard nothing. I ran. I know they jumped to grab me, but obviously they were not successful. I ran two blocks and took a taxi...

R: The rear of the truck was open?

M: The rear had a loose flap...

R: The date, when was it?

M: March 17.

R: Well, I believe I have everything. Thank you and good luck.